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# The Rabbit Foot



Poems by  
Byrd Mason



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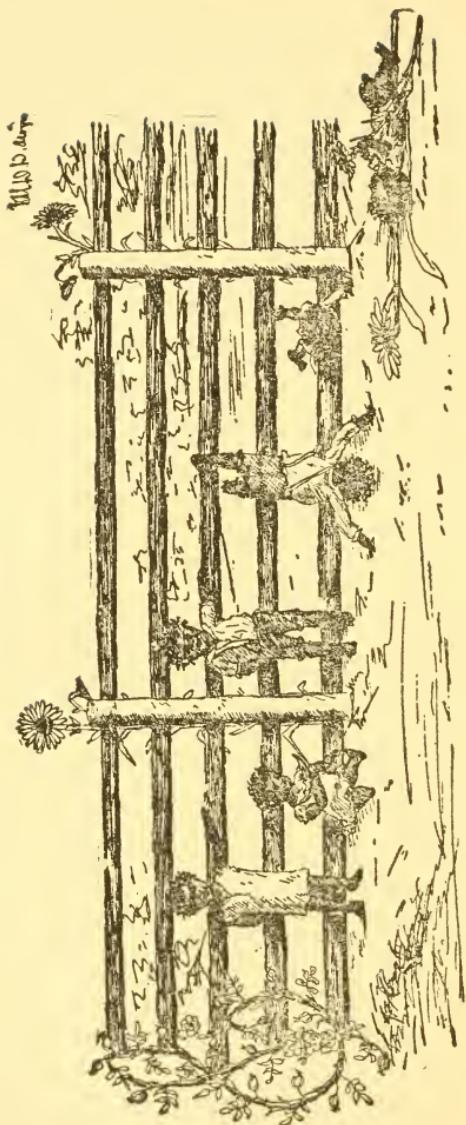












Look a - way ! Nine - ie land!

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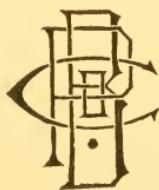
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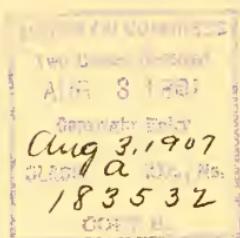
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To "Uncle Remus,"  
As some slight recognition  
Of the pleasure afforded my boys  
By "Brer Rabbit."



## A Day Too Late.

I met a friend not long ago,  
From a far distant State,  
Who had come to visit Virginia  
With expectations great.

For she had heard so much of us,  
In such romantic guise,  
She thought the day had come at last  
For dreams to realize.

She thought to find those same grand homes,  
With gates spread open wide,  
And all the adjuncts of the past  
Aristocratic pride.

She thought to find a welcome free,  
Guests coming by the score,  
With compliments and toasts and jests,  
With dance and feasts galore.

Centaurs and cavaliers the men,  
Roses-in-bloom the maids,  
Majestic age with silvery hair,  
And friends of every grade.

The hospitality of those fine  
Housekeepers of the past,  
She should have known that fairy tale  
Was but too bright to last.

She expected to drive with coach and six,  
Outriders fore and aft,  
But when she spoke of doing that same—  
Why, all of us just laughed.

Those ancestral homes in ruins lie,  
Of friends so true and tried,  
Many are dead, the rest of them  
Are scattered far and wide.

The belles and beauties of long ago  
Have doffed their gracious airs,  
Another sort usurps the place  
They once considered theirs.

Only traditions of our past,  
Survive just now and then,  
While even those are dying out,  
And disbelieved of men.

Those lowly friends whose merriment  
Cheered night into the day,  
No longer friends, but secret foes,  
Somewhat to our dismay.

The little black who saved the steps,  
Obedient as a child,  
Has grown into the Caliban  
Of Shakespeare's Tempest Isle.

Our hearts are just as warm perhaps,  
But buffets of stern fate  
Have changed our lives—I greatly fear  
She came a day too late.

\* \* \* \* \*

But ere these times are quite forgot,  
I'll try by skill of mine,  
To draw them as they used to be  
In simple true outline.

## The Rabbit Foot.

“I dun brung you er rabbit-foot, Miss Grace,  
 An’ I hopes ’twill bring you luck,  
 Ef you ain’t too high-fer-lut-in  
 Ter takes intrust in sech truck.

“I cotched him myself er week ergo,  
 At dat chuch-yard do’ by night,  
 An’ cut off his leff hine foot right straight,  
 Arfter er tuzzlin’ fight.”

“What sort of luck should I expect?  
 For just what you might call  
 Good luck, or bad, I mightn’t think  
 Any sort of a luck at all.

“Dat’s de trufe, yas’m, it sartinly so,  
 I moughtn’t agree wid you;  
 Kase my bess of luck would princ’ply be  
 Jess nuthin’ er tall to do.

“Cepp eatin’ uv watermilyuns—  
 I had dun fergot dat fac—  
 Thanky, Miss Grace! (dat leff hine foot  
 Dun started ’pon hits track!”)

## Little Lucy.

They were all Episcopalian,  
These darkeys at the Hall,  
And congregated at the church  
To christen children small.

The preacher stood arrayed in white,  
In stiff and awesome state,  
To pour the holy chrism o'er  
Each little woolly pate.

“Name this child!” Kate catches breath,  
She lisps: “Justh Luthy, thir,”  
He stopt in fear and trembling,  
For he thought it “Lucifer.”

“I daren’t baptize a Christian child  
By such a name as that—”  
And looked so fiercely at her,  
That Kate, fluttering like a bat,

Whispered “Pleathe, thir, choothe yourself,  
Tho’ ther won’t no harm be dun—”  
“Well,” said he, “what do you think  
Of the name of—Washington?”

Then took the silence for consent,  
Announced with solemn air,  
"This child is named George Washington—"  
And wondered at her stare.

The mother melted into tears,  
And lifted up a wail  
That smote the truth into his ears,  
And made the preacher quail.

"Dar now! Dar now! What I'm gwine do  
Wid dith poor leetle one,  
De onlieth gal I got on yerth  
Dun named George Wathington!"

## Aunt Cindy's Portrait.

Miss say she warnt my pictur tuk,  
    Jess like I'm uvvery day—  
I don want no pictur tuk of mine  
    Ef I got ter look dat way.

Er pritty sight me—ole checked-cote  
    An' hyar tied up wid strings,  
An' jess all bundled up enyhow,  
    Who uvver heerd sech things!

Miss dunno what she talkin' 'bout,  
    Me—in my slip-shod shoe,  
Wid nary bit uv bunnit on—  
    An' in er pictur, too!

I don't warnt folks ter 'member me  
    'Cepp drust up in my bess;  
I don't cornsider it respects er tall  
    All floured up and messed.

I warnts my new manchiller on,  
    An' fan helt in my han';  
'An' settin' down like sho-'nuff fokes,  
    De quality ov de lan'.

I hain't gwine ter hab no chillen ov mine  
Er 'spisin' ov my looks,  
Dat likeness got ter do me proud  
Like de vittles what I cooks.

Miss ain't got nun ov hern dat way,  
Hern's drust in velvits fine,  
An' lessen I wars my Sund'y-bess,  
She don' git nun ov mine.

Miss don' suspicion how I feels,  
But 'ceppin' we ergree  
'Bout dem Sund'y-go-ter-meetin' close—  
No sar! No mam! No me!

## Aunt Cindy's Pound Cake.

“That cake was most delicious,  
Can’t you tell me how it’s made?”

“Why, certingly, Miss,” most graciously  
The courteous accents said.

“In cose, you takes plenty flour ernuff,  
De size de cake you warnt,  
An’ den de aigs—jess ez you please—  
Sum’s little, an’ sum aren’t.

You graduates de shuger nex,  
Wid er lump ov butter, too;  
You beats de aigs—de yokes and whites—  
Den beats de butter thru.

How big er lump ov butter, say?  
Jess like I says it twuz,  
I thought enybody knowed how big  
Er lump ov butter wus.

An’ den you beats—an’ beats—an’ beats,  
Twell de dough gits reely warm,  
An’ you gits warm er beatin’ it;  
You earn’t do it eny harm,

Kase de mo' you beats de better 'tis,  
Fer er light-minded one;  
Well, den you bakes an' bakes dat dough,  
Twell it rises like de sun.

Dat's all de way—de way I duz,  
Kase dat's de way ter bake,  
An' you ain't nuvver set your toof  
In eny better cake.

Huccum you don't understan' dat talk ?  
Why, dat one you jess eat  
Was made dat way, an' you jess say  
Dat cake, it carn't be beat."

"But I always thought a real pound-cake  
Took just a pound around—"  
"Laws ! no chile ! it's dat beatin'  
What makes 'um call it pound."

## “Children Should be Seen and Not Heard.”

Mammy appears with bonnet tied,  
And basket on her arm,  
A look of mighty importance  
On her usual visage calm—  
For important looking persons  
Mammy bears the palm.

A chorus of little voices:  
“O! Mammy! Let me go!  
I won’t be any trouble—I’ll do  
Whatever you tell me to—”  
“I earn’t let you go dis mornin’,  
Dough I is sorry, sho’.

“But I mought bring you sumthin’ back,  
Ef you ’have like chillen should;  
Dough I earn’t tell you what it is,  
It’s sumthin’ mighty good,  
But er powerful secret, hunny,  
Mammy’d tell you ef she could.”

“Why, where are you going, Mammy?”  
Asks the boldest of the throng,

Re-echoed by the rest of us,  
Although we know it's wrong;  
But it's such a favor for Mammy  
To take one of us along.

Then all of us stand quite abashed,  
For we know what Mammy thinks,  
When she straightens up and sets her mouth  
As solemn as the Sphynx,  
And wait in awestruck silence,  
And even the boldest blinks.

Mammy can't "intolerate" questions,  
And Mammy's black eyes shine,  
She turns with a reproving look  
And finished sarcasm fine:  
"I'm gwine whar I'm gwine, dat's whar—  
Now you know whar I'm er gwine."

## Little Magnolia's Religion.

Always on the Sabbath-day  
Somebody tries to preach or pray,  
When the little darkeys come to say

Their share of Catechism lore,  
A task by which they set much store,  
Now set aside forevermore.

Little Magnolia comes with the rest,  
In linsey-wolsey gaily drest,  
And answers bravely with the best.

Little Magnolia's fat and brown,  
While all alert from toe to crown,  
Intimidated by a frown.

Little Magnolia always sings  
Of golden streets with harps and strings,  
And Jesus' love and angel wings.

Of the doctrine of eternal fires  
She somewhat anxiously inquires,  
It evidently awe inspires.

She listens with a mild surprise,  
About that home beyond the skies;  
Then little Magnolia "bats" her eyes,

And solemnly shakes her kinky head:  
"I dunno what I do ef I be ded,  
I jess es lief stay here instead—"

A tear-drop twinkles like a star:  
"I suttinly don' want ter go nowhar,  
Less I know Mammy gwine be thar."

## Uncle Bumpass.

Ef I wus ter tell all dat I knows,  
'Twould raise er rumpuss sho';  
I jess now passed erlong de hall  
An' cum by dat side do'.

You knows dey keeps de brandy on  
Dat sidebode in de hall;  
Handy ter ax fokes fer ter drink  
When cump'ny cum ter call.

An' dar wus Uncle Bumpass,  
Es jess es bold es brass,  
Er drinkin' frum de 'canter  
'Thout even techin' er glass.

Dat Bumpass sho' is spiled ter deff,  
An' always wus er limb;  
I don' speck he kno' ef dat dar house  
B'long ter Miss, er him.

He seed me, an' jess humped his back,  
An' gin er leetle snigger;  
"Dis her's Miss' licker you see gwine  
Inter yer Mistis' nigger."

An' Miss—she wond'rin' uvvery day,  
Why dat licker don' hole out;  
I don' see what she wunderin' at,  
Ef she jess look erbout.

Ef I warnt feared uv Bumpass,  
I'd er tole her long ergo;  
But jess you wait—one day—ole Miss  
Will cum by dat side do'."

## Ole Rufe.

Ole Rufe was caught red-handed;  
No excuse came to his brain,  
"Kase tain't no use to splainify,  
When things they won't stay splain.

Dat chicken runned right crost my parth,  
Jess fryin'-size an' fat;  
My hans jess reached out uv demselves  
An' cotched him—simperly dat.

I got ter take what cumbs ter me,  
Whatsumever de law erlow,  
Kase I carn't ercount fer dat dar fowl—  
I no-count nigger, enyhow."

### The Sabbath Rest.

“I always likes ov Sundy morns  
Ter knock off at my ease,  
An’ set out in de porch an’ watch  
De birds out in dem trees—  
An’—Miss Kitty, I wish you’d ax yer Pa,  
Ter len’ me de paper, please.”

“Which one ?” “Jess eny one he’s got,  
It’s all de same ter me,  
I carn’t read nare one, but I likes  
Ter set whar fokes kin see ;  
An’ I ’joys myseff er thinkin’ how  
I looks like ole Mars Lee.”

He’s a very respectable old man,  
Of warm and chocolate brown,  
All of his colored friends stop and speak,  
On their errands through the town ;  
And he enjoys his papers much  
As he holds them upside down.

## A Penny for Your Thoughts.

“Miss gin Penny er long brown cloak  
Dat recht plum ter her knees,  
An’ jess es good es new, ’cept whar  
Miss drapt er streak ov grease.

Long down on de frontispeace,  
An’ in cose she culdn’t war,  
So ’twus luck fer Penny—an’ er hat  
Wid fethers here an’ thar.

When Sundy cum she hustled um on,  
An’ traipsed erlong ter church,  
Her mouf er grin frum year ter year,  
Her face one gret big smirch.

She slipt out ’fore de ress ov us,  
Dough she had werk ter do;  
An’ got dar ’fore de preacher did—  
And percht in de middle pew.

I had ter stay at home dat day  
To do what she dun leff;  
I owed her er grudge an’ she got it,  
Er swingin’ frum de heff.

I wisht you'd seen her fling her hed  
Wid dem fethers flyin' 'roun',  
She nuvver lookt lower dan de skies,  
An' hardly teched de groun'.

Den she cum twistin' in de house,  
So proud she bar end speak,  
Like dat wus de fus cloak uvver made,  
Wid dat long greasy streak.

She marched up ter de lookin'-glass  
Wid her hed tost in de ar;"  
"I wisht you'd bin erlong wid me  
An' seed dem darkies star!

Dey lookt, an' lookt, an' I felt fine—"  
Den I larft twell I wus hurt,  
"I ain't wund'rin' at dat starin', nun—  
Whar you leff yer bottom skirt?"

### Mammy's Recipe for Catchup.

"You fust take sum termottoses——"

"How many?" "Jess you choose,  
About es many as you think  
You need to want ter use.

An' slice an' stew um er long time,  
Hit's pintedly werk, not fun;  
Mine, stew um slow, as long's you think  
Hit'll take ter be well done.

An' den you take some inguns,  
Keep stewin' all erlong;  
But don't put too many inguns in,  
De ketchup be too strong.

Den er pinch uv cloves—an' spices,  
Not nuff ter spile de looks,  
An' don't you put um in too soon,  
Dey darkens whiles dey cooks.

An' sum likes corimander seed,  
But I don' holes by dat,  
Ner po' man's flaver, cinnermun,  
Hit makes hit tase too flat.

Not much uv all, and yit ernuff;  
I fergot dem peppers, too;  
You better put too much uv thum,  
Den resk erbout too few."

"How much? How many?" "I carn't tell,  
You puts in, an' dispense  
Jess by yer sense ov feelins—  
Ain't you got natchul sense?"

"By those rules—you call them rules?"  
"In cose—an' sho' I do—"  
"I think your 'ketch-up' recipe  
Is certainly 'catch-up' too."

Mammy is mighty 'fended now;  
"Well, ef you knows de bess,  
Whyn't you make hit yer own seff,  
An' leab me ter my ress."

### The Akase.

“What you warnt here, little Miss?”

“Why, I’ve come to learn to cook;”

“Now you march straight back ter that thar  
house,

An’ read yer pictur-book,

An’ tend ter white foke’s business,

Whar white fokes understans;

You got no business ’round dis fire

Er spilin’ dem white hands.

Yer granma’d rise up in her grabe

To see are chile of hern

Er meddlin’ wid er butcher-knife,

Or projickin’ wid er churn.

An’ I jess mixin’ uv dis dough,

Two cakes ter make an’ bake,

An’ here you cum wid sum yer fun;

Don’ talk, fer pity’s sake,

Kase I got no time ter wase jess now,

An’ de kitchen ain’ no place

Fer dem dar shoes an’ ruffled dress,

Ner fer quality chillen’s face.

You got plenty ov fokes ter cook fer you  
De ress of your born days;"  
"But why can't I learn to cook myself?"  
"Kase," argues Mammy, "Kase."

So then fate's fiat has gone forth,  
The "ukase" of our Czar,  
Like axioms of self-evident truths,  
For Mammy's "kase" is law.

"Miss" returns to her pleasant tasking  
And resumes her picture-book;  
Now many a time she wrings her hands  
That she didn't learn to cook.

### The Buzzg Bee.

Mort was always good-natured and ready to  
laugh,

In fact, he was generally grinning,  
With his eyes and his teeth in boldest relief,  
But droning's the worst of his sinning.

He can play a good tune and dance to its time,  
And has a good voice for the singing;  
His efforts stop there, for though advice is not  
rare,  
For a chorus is usually ringing.

Of "lazy" and "trifless" and "wuthless" and  
such  
Epithets must he daily be hearing;  
But they make no sort of impression on Mort,  
Though not for the want of good rearing.

His mother never let up on dinning it in,  
His wife kept continually prodding;  
It seemed like the bees buzzing on in the trees,  
And oftentimes set him to nodding.

"You mus spec ter fine munny growin' 'pun  
trees,

Kase you ain't nuvver earned yer own salt-in—”

“I nuvver seed no good in sech high-seasoned food,  
Tain't me dat fine all dat faultin'.”

“Don't yer know,” plead his wife, “dat Satan look out

Fer ter keep idle hans all er werkin',  
An' you know you is lazy an' shiffless an' slazy,  
What you mean by interminal shirkin'?”

“Yes, I knows dat Satan induschus ernuff,  
Dat he wussern er bee er er hornit,  
But yer fine yerseff losin' sum good time er-busin',  
Whiles you breaves in my years like er cornit.”

“I bleaves ef you had er whole fiel' ov wheat,  
You wouldn't *busy* yerseff fer ter reap it—”  
“Busy! Dat de onliest good quality de debble am got,  
An' I moves fer ter let de debble keep it.”

### Prudence.

I 'low she are de slightenest one  
Dat I did uver see,  
An' when I tells you her lass trick,  
I think you'll ergree wid me.

Miss hired her when her nuss wus sick,  
An' busying wid dem all;  
Jess erwaitin' at dat dippo,  
When dey heerd de ingin squall.

“Now” ses Miss, “you takes dis chile  
An’ hole her by de han’,  
An’ be reddy ter jump in arfter me,  
When de cyars cum ter de stan’.”

An’ dat outdashus gal got in,  
Wid er little light-hyared chile  
Ere fitein’ like de scratches,  
An’ lookin’ skeered an’ wile.

An’ de ingine started off right straight,  
An’ Miss lookt at her face;  
Ef you b’leaves, ’twas sum strange chile  
Dat she’d jukked off de place.

Er chile dey nuvver seed befo',  
An' 'Lisbuth leff behine,  
Well, you reckon dey started telegrums  
Explainin' 'bout deir mine.

Dey stopt at de fust place on de road,  
An' had her exprust back;  
An' finnuly got our 'Lizerbuth  
Frum off de ingine track.

"An', lawsy me, why, tain't my fault,  
I didn't knowed her name,  
But I grabbed de bess one dat I seed,  
An' I don' bar no blame.

"I thought," sed dat trifless nigger,  
"Dat she wus er awful chile,  
But I put up wid her fitein' ov me  
Kase white fokes always spiled."

### Fuss an' Duss.

Miss sho' do make er lot ov fuss  
'Bout keepin' ov things clean,  
An' peekin' 'bout in cornders  
Whar nuthin' kin be seen.

"Sweep here! Bresh dis! Duss thar!  
Now pick up all dem strings,"  
An' who you reckon got de nerve  
Ter look arfter all dem things?

Now I don' pruve ov so much werk,  
Who reckon dirt gwine hurt;  
Miss suttinly dun fergot de fac,  
Dat we alls made ov dirt.

Suttinly, we'uns made out dirt,  
An' terns ter dirt ergin;  
An' yit Miss keep us wrasslin' 'round  
Like good clean dirt wus sin.

### The Old Hen-Wife.

“Miss Rose, lemme hab yer hens ter raise,  
I got de likeliest place,  
Whar de grass am green, an’ er lively drain,  
An’ de water jess runs ter waste;  
My fowls, ef I do say it myseff,  
Do hab de bestes tase.

I takes all de trubble offen yer hans,  
An’ raise dem hens fer haff;  
De mill ain’t fur, an’ dey picks up  
Deir livin’ off offal an’ chaff;  
I sho’ is lucky wid my hens—”  
She ends with a jolly laugh.

So just to try, she gives her twelve  
Of Cochin eggs to hatch,  
After due time she makes her way  
Down by P’lina’s patch.  
(Now old P’lina’s smooth a one  
The world may find to match.)

The chickens are of frying size,  
P’lina’s face all smile,

“Now jess sit down an’ ress yerseff,  
An’ look eroun’ erwhile;  
Hit’s menny er day sense you bin heer—  
Hits nigh erbout er mile.

You don’ say you walked dis fur  
On dem leetle teensy feet?  
I ’clar, Miss Rose, you sho’ looks young,  
An’ dat dress sho’ is sweet!”  
“We’ll talk about the chickens now—  
They must be ready to eat.

How many of my dozen hatched?”  
“De hen jess hatched out six—  
An’ laws, Miss Rose, your six eggs spiled—  
How white fokes does git mixt,  
Jess six eggs hatched—an’ dem six dar  
Is my harf ov de chicks.”

### Manners.

“There goes old Aunt Mary now,  
Run and catch her, please;  
I want her to come some time next week  
To help boil down that grease.

I want her for fifty other things—  
Find out if she can come,  
Or I’ll have to look for some one else—  
Now call her—you’re not dumb.”

Aunt Mary halts—“Now, you be sure  
To tell her to come next week.”  
Aunt Mary’s a regular character,  
A Barnum Museum freak.

But she well knows how to do her work;  
An invaluable aid  
In times of great emergency,  
If sure to be well paid.

Whatever you say, her eyes are skinned  
To her own interest sure,  
And if she is not paid enough—  
She’ll take it, even more.

They talk so long before the gate  
My patience quite gives out,  
So I saunter slowly down the lane  
To see what they are about.

For nothing's happened that I know  
In the county or the town,  
To require elaborate gestures  
And wavings up and down.

I hear in snatches as I walk:  
"Aunt Polly's Susan Ann,"  
And somebody's sister "'Melia"  
And Aunt Mary's own "ole man."

I hear nothing at all about my soap,  
Or any of my affairs,  
And I must shift some of the burden  
Of accumulating cares.

I break in on the list of friends,  
Like the pibroch of old days,  
The enumerations of Scotch clans  
With their uncommon ways.

At last a pause: "Well, can you come?"  
"Come? What for? And Whar?  
And how fer is I got ter walk?  
An' when will I git thar?"

This is the form of mother-wit,  
Of many of her kind;  
I well know how she always talks,  
So I needn't ever mind.

But I look in amazement at my maid,  
Who doesn't offer to speak;  
"Why! Hasn't Parthenia told you  
I want you to work next week?"

"Parthenia! What is the matter with you?"  
"I hadn't dun fergit,  
But I hadn't jess finished axin'  
'Bout all her kinfokes yit."

## The Traveled Monkey.

Ole Mills didn't hab no manner uv use  
Fer Joe before he went,  
Still less when he had cum back home,  
Stuffed up with ars and scent.

You kno he nuvver had no sense,  
Kase Jim wus sure pea-green;  
No, I ain't talkin' 'bout ole Mills,  
I darsen't—he too mean.

You dunno what you gwine ter ketch  
When you meddles wid ole Mills;  
Fokes say he's cunjur, watch yer mouf  
'Bout uvvery werd it spills.

But Joe cum trippin' on his toes,  
Er bowin' 'roun' wid smiles,  
Usein' de biggest sort ov werds,  
De shortess reach three miles.

Unc'l Mills batted ov his eyes,  
One second 'twus forty winks,  
An' drawed his mouf all in and out,  
We knowed what ole Mills thinks.

Now here's er sample ov dat Joe:  
 "An' yer corpus segradiates well?"  
 "I'm pleasured wid memorial news,"  
 "Quite an umbral smell."

We all wus feared to say one werd,  
 When Mills keep battin' his eyes;  
 Twell he says: "Is dis here Joseph's coat  
 On Mr. Sollermun Wise ?

An' will sumbody please ter tell  
 What dis here gentlemun say,  
 Kase ef he means insults by dem,  
 He better track out my way."

Sumbody tried to 'splain ter him  
 Dat what Joe meant ter say  
 Was sum kine ov er compliment,  
 But sed sum yether way.

An' Uncle Mills kepp on battin' his eyes,  
 An' wavin' ov dat han';  
 "Den Mister Wise must use de werds  
 Dat fokes kin understan'."

When ole Mills bat bof hans an' eyes,  
 We got reesins ter know de cause;  
 He jess er eechin' for ter reech out  
 An' smack somebody's jaws.

Joe called back his 'membrances,  
Kase Joe, he knowed it too,  
An' de nex time he cum traipsin' in  
He sed plain "Howdy-do."

## Uncle Ajax.

Uncle Ajax has a curious way  
Of muttering all the time;  
Carrying a brisk talking on,  
Half reason and half rhyme.

He works the garden in the Spring;  
You hear his voice for hours;  
Nobody there but the trees and weeds,  
The grass, and the young Spring flowers.

Sometimes he goes on so fast  
You'd think he had a double,  
While the cadences go up and down,  
As if Ajax was in trouble.

His thoughts fly off to far-off times,  
The future, or the past,  
The present hardships of his lot,  
The length of time they last.

“Run,” said I once to Mammy Kate,  
As they swung from bass to treble;  
“Laws, chile, I darsent ventur, kase  
Ajax talkin’ ter de debble.”

## Lightwood.

“Why, Uncle Yorke!  
And how do you do?”  
“Tolerbul poorly, Miss Vi,  
Arfter what I goes thru;  
I dun got rheumatiz,  
Ez you kin see—  
Or ruther de rheumatiz  
Dun got me.  
An’ I ain’t gettin’ ’long  
So well es I mought;  
I got pleny ter eat,  
But my wood gin out;  
An’ I cum ter ax yer  
Fer er tern  
Of sum oak-knots  
Dat’s fitten ter burn;  
An’ I pays you back  
Ef I libs twell Spring,  
An’ Spring mos’ here,  
Ef de birds don’ sing.”

“If you’ll cut up  
That tree by the fall,  
And move it away,  
You can have it all.”

"Laws, sholy! Miss Vi!  
 You don't expec  
 Me ter tech are tree  
 Whar litenin' strecks?  
 You won't git are nigger  
 In dese lands,  
 Ter meddle wid litenin'  
 Wid his hands.  
 Dat tree will stan'  
 While de werl muve 'roun',  
 Ef you waits fer me  
 Ter cut it down.  
 I'd friz ter deff  
 'Fore I toch are limb,  
 When litenin' strecks  
 It b'longs ter Him.

You be totin' bad luck  
 Ercrost yer floor  
 When you totes dat wood  
 Insiden yer do'.  
 An' you don' know—?  
 Whar you bin raise?  
 Dat ter burn dat wood  
 Will shorten yer days?  
 You moughtn't b'leave  
 What de witches sed,  
 But dat be too late  
 When Yorke be ded.

Well, I sho' am bleeged—  
    Good-by, Miss Vi,  
I fotch yer dat litewood  
    'Fore I die.  
But ef you wants  
    Ter lose yer breff,  
You trý dat ded wood  
    By yerseff."

### The Ounce of Prevention.

No darkey ever acknowledged good health,  
    He was always “Poorly, thank God!”  
You’d think his back was bent or broke  
    By submission to the rod.

“Bress God! He’d a mizry in his hade,”  
    Or rheumatiz in his knees;  
But everything—ailments, good or bad,  
    Was plastered by that “Please.”

If you’d ask what really was the cause  
    Of making such a fuss,  
“Dar ain’t nuthin’ ’tickler de matter terday—  
    But I’m feared of gittin’ wuss.”

### The Old-Time Gourd.

You kin talk erbout yer silber cups,  
An' tankards wid de ale,  
An' er thursty man upon er pinch  
Kin tilt de water-pail;  
Out in de fiels yer own two hans  
An unsartin sup kin 'ford;  
But you dunno how water ought ter tase  
Lessen you drinks frum de gourd.

De white fokes drinks out menny things,  
Jess 'cordlin' how dey raise,  
Coke-nut dippers, tumblers, mugs,  
An' menny yether ways;  
But fur de rale pleasure,  
An' de water jess bin poured,  
Fer satersfaction all eroun',  
Gimme er drink frum de gourd.

De gourd wus made fer niggers,  
Jess growin' 'long de groun',  
Takin' life easy in de mine  
An' lazin' all eroun'.

Go down ter dat spring in de hollow,  
Whar de summer coolness stored,  
An' fotch dat bucket drippin' back  
An' gimme er drink frum de gourd.

### Little Pot-Hooks.

The guns had opened a steady fire,  
The grass with blood was wet;  
When a negro baby toddled up  
Along the parapet.

Composed and calm as the sky above  
He walked serenely through  
The shot and shell of the belching guns  
With the fire and smoke in view.

Black as the ace of spades was he,  
With one white garment on;  
That scantily covered the little limbs,  
And that was tattered and worn.

A flag of truce—for both sides stopped—  
It created quite a stir—  
“I jess cumed up hyar fer ter see  
What all dis noise is fer.

I warnts ter see de ginrul Boss  
What owns all dese here guns;”  
A hand reached up and dragged him down  
While a shout of laughter runs

All through the startled camping-grounds.

“Now, Sambo, what’s your will ??”

“I wisht, Mr. Ginrul, dat you’d make

All dese here guns keep still.

Mammy put me in my cradle,

An’ rockt me a whole heep;

But I dun tole her twarnt no use,

Kase I carn’t go ter sleep

Wid all dis racket ’roun’ me;

An’ ef you’ll be so good—

I wisht you’d stop it, Mister—”

And “Mister” wished he could.

### Jacob's Ladder.

Uncle Jake lived up in de loft,  
In de cabin ov his niece,  
Kase he sed dat wuz de onliest place  
He cud find enny peace.

Un uvvery time when he cum down  
Dat larther, day by day,  
He sot it up erginst de wall  
Ter keep it out de way.

De werd were kerried 'roun' erbout  
Dat he were moughty rich;  
All his rullations kep deirselves  
Chuned up ter concert pitch.

An', by an' by, he cum ter die,  
Dey all wuz getherin' 'roun',  
An' Uncle Jake he stretched his eyes  
Like he wake frum er swound.

"I leabes ter Sue an' chillen  
My ole black stockin'-fut;  
Hit's in de bottom ov de chist—  
Leasways, dar's whar 'twas put."

An' den his eyes kep wundering—  
An' his voice grow moughty soff—  
“Yes, angels, set dat larther up—  
I'm gwine inter yer loft.”

## Uncle Yurke's Indians.

Yes, I knowed all 'bout Injuns;  
I knowed um fust an' last,  
An' you young fokes may thank your stars  
Dat Injun-time dun past.

I seed um cum, an' I seed um go,  
Wid deir tomashawks an' paint,  
An' de likeliest Injun dat I seed  
Was fur frum bein' er saint.

'Twarnt no fun, now I tells yer,  
Ter heer dem Injuns yell,  
An' fly erbout wid tomashawks  
Ter roast yer shins er spell.  
I tells yer now 'twus somethin' fierce  
Ter see dem Injuns dance,  
An' sculp de top ov yer only hed,  
Whenuvver dey got er chance.

De onliest good Injun is er dead one, sho',  
I heerd sumbody sed;  
Ef Miss Pocahontus wus er good Injun,  
Well, ain't Miss Poky ded?

An' she bin ded er good long time,  
Mos' fokes is dun forgit,  
But Injuns is—Injuns—an' I kno  
Her kin-fokes livin' yit.

### Miss Darling.

Graduated—and with a head choke full,  
Of all new-fangled germs,  
Her language spiced with college slang  
And scientific terms.

Elected to teach, because she knows  
So much beyond a doubt;  
Feels vastly superior to the race  
That dwell around about.

She reads a tome of ponderous size,  
And toasts her feet at the fire,  
Sub-conscious of the wisdom  
That others should admire.

When old Belinda's turbaned head  
Is popped inside the door—  
"Well, Miss Darling, I sho' is glad  
You here fer sartin' sho'."

Passes the compliments of the day,  
With futurity of hope;  
Then asks if she knows "when the moon will  
wax  
Ter make er bilin' ov soap."

Miss Darling stares, as well she might,  
With nothing at all to say,  
For what does she know about waxing,  
And bilings are not her way.

She thinks Belinda out of her mind,  
Mixing up soap and moon,  
And devoutly wishes one might come  
To relieve the stress, and soon.

Belinda laughs at her vacant stare,  
“Laws! chile, I jess cum ter ax  
When the moon kin change—ter bile the soap  
Frum out de alminax?

Or kin you tell me when de new moon  
Will be upon de crease?  
Kase I should be loth ter spile  
All dat dar mutton gréase.

I dun save er lot of good white fat,  
An’ hate ter see it wase;  
Ef de moon beent right—” and laughs again  
At Miss Darling’s puzzled face.

“Don’t you know fokes don’ bile no soap  
When de moon am on de wane;  
Hit’ll all dry up, an’ won’t make suds,  
An’ de trubble all be vain?”

Miss Darling vaguely remembers,  
    “Hitch your wagon to a star.”  
But it doesn’t seem to fit right in,  
    Or the wagon seems to jar.

“No,” she answers coldly,  
    “I know nothing of that kind—”  
And feels the weighty significance  
    Of an educated mind.

Belinda turns in silent scorn,  
    With an insulted air,  
And settles her opinion  
    Of Miss Darling then and there.

“Laws! calling herseff uv er teacher,”  
    She grunts when out of range;  
“An’ carn’t even tell er poor nigger  
    When the moon gwine change.”

### Spreading the Parting.

“Ole Marster called we darkeys up  
Frum de plantation grouns,  
De yard wus black with bobbin’ heads  
Fur suvral yards eroun’.

“Now,” ses ole Marser, “youse all free,”  
An’ er tear wus in his eye;  
“You dun dun yer duty all by me,  
An’ I wants ter say good-by.

I wish you well, my lifetime friends,  
We’ve wintered many years,”  
De ress dat he wus gwine ter say  
Was swallered up wid tears.

Ole Marster stood in silence, den  
And waved ter all his han’;  
Den Dinks stept up an’ made er bow,  
“Does we alls understand

Dat we is free ter go—er stay?  
Jess as we please an’ choose;  
An’ muss we go, or kin we stay?  
Dis here’s configin news.

Kase I ain't got nowhars ter go,  
My wife an' chillen's ded,  
An' out in dat same buryin'-ground  
I hopes ter lay dis hed.

An' ef it's all de same ter you,  
I stays right on right here,  
An' goes an' plows dat same low grouns  
I dun plowed forty year."

Den Chloe said: "How 'bout dat chile ?  
Is she gwine 'long wid me ?  
Is you gwine make her papers out  
An' say we bofe is free ?

What I gwine say ter Mistis,  
Up 'mongst dem heavenly palms,  
When she ax me 'bout dat dar chile  
She leff in dese two arms ?

You know she call ter me dat night,  
Upon dat dyin' bed,  
An' I promist on my bended knees,  
An' dese de werds I said :

I calls de Lord ter witness,  
Wid dat chile upon my bress,  
Ter see dat I tuk keer ov her,  
Den Mistis went ter ress.

I gwine ter luk Miss in de face,  
An' straight betwixt de eye,  
I dun tuk keer of dat po' chile  
Twell I were called on high.

An' dough she almoss big ernuff  
Ter take keer of herseff,  
Miss 'spees me ter look arfter her  
Untwell my dyin' breff.

Ef Missy carn't go 'long wid me,  
I stays here twell I dies;"  
An' uvvery darkey standin' dar  
Had tears in bof' his eyes.

But sum dem young an' trifless ones  
'Pon what no reed depens,  
Dey squanderd off all which-er-ways,  
But we uns parted frens.

"An' whar wus I? An' whar'd I go?  
Ax what ole Marster thinks;  
I thought I had dun 'splained myself  
Dat my name wus ole Dinks."

### The Hegira.

For at least six months after the war,  
The darkeys staid at home,  
Then began a great migration,  
They said "De werd dun cum."

"What word? From whom? From where?"  
But that was all they said,  
And further explanation  
Was never ever made.

For whatever thoughts roll inside  
Beneath those crinkled hairs,  
You'll never know—that secret gift,  
Silence—is surely theirs.

But in spite of all persuasion  
Some staid where they were born,  
Even suffered persecution—  
Held by their race in scorn.

They worked on till their dying day,  
And knew no other place,  
Some faithful hearts were staunch and true,  
Even of a treacherous race.

Ever and anon some notice reads,  
"Passed—from the dark to light,"  
"Our Mammy" or "Old Uncle Jake—"  
"Black, but the soul was white."

### Et Apres.

Think of the little ones now-a-days  
Born to untoward fate,  
Who never will hear a slumber-song  
With Mammies out of date.

No comforting for childish woes,  
No kiss to ease a pain,  
If they look to hireling nurses,  
They look, alas! in vain.

Her only thought of precious charge  
Her wages by the week;  
But otherwise a nuisance,  
If her inmost soul could speak.

We ought to give the children  
Of love a ten-fold store,  
When the Mammies of the South are gone—  
And gone forever more.

## The Problems of the Day.

Dey talks erbout de problumses  
    Of dese here curis times,  
An' how de puzzle werries um,  
    Wid de multiflyin' crimes.

An' wunders, wunders how dey cums,  
    An' what dey's gwine ter do,  
An' how cum dis, an' how goes dat,  
    An' what's er cumin' true.

An' er poor ole nigger jess like me,  
    Black es de midnight's face,  
Kin gin dem easy answers fer  
    All dis here cumin' race.

Dey jess needs good ole 'ligion,  
    De good ole-fashuned kine,  
An' take de hoe an' go ter werk,  
    Dat'll easy up de mine.

Dey ain't no puzzle ter be 'splain,  
    Dat answer dun cum true,  
Laws! Dese here problums ole es time,  
    Hit's jess de people's new.

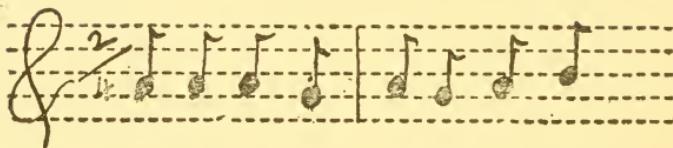
Dat's all—dat's faif, an' common-sense,  
Don' worry 'bout no more;  
Ole-time 'ligion bar you up,  
An' lan' you on dat shore.

Dat yether shore, dat shining shore,  
Whar dar nuvver is no night,  
Whar poor fokes walks upon de gold,  
An' black fokes same as white.

### Dixie's Land.

These little picaninnies  
That scramble on the fence,  
Are lively living pictures  
That appeal to Southern sense.

With all their grins of merriment  
No sorrow serves to stem ;  
But this race is disappearing fast,  
So make the most of them.



Old times dar am not for-got-ten !

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